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TN AMONG FIVE STATES TO GET FIRST BATCH OF REMDESIVIR

Hyderabad-based pharma has made available 20,000 vials of the drug that hastens recovery in moderate Covid-19 cases

PRICE FIXED AT ₹5,400 FOR 100 MG

Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat and Telangana—all hit hard by the pandemic—are the other states to receive the drug named 'Covifor', priced at ₹5,400 for a vial of 100 mg. The suggested dose is 200 mg on the first day of a six-day course, followed by 100 mg per day for the next five days. In total, the cost of a course will work up to ₹37,800 per patient |P9

COMING SOON TO VIJAYAWADA, KOCHI

- In India, remdesivir has been tried previously as part of a WHO solidarity trial to assess its effectiveness against Covid-19
- In a clinical trial in the US, patients who received the drug recovered, on an average, 31% faster than those who did not
- Vijayawada, Kochi, Bhubaneshwar, too will receive the drug soon

1 lakh

VIALS OF THE DRUG ARE TO BE MADE IN THE NEXT FOUR WEEKS

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

MEA accuses China of disregarding pacts, amassing troops since May

Raps it for attempting to change status quo, shifting position on the Galwan Valley

PUSHKAR BANAKAR @New Delhi

ACCUSING China of amassing troops and armaments along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) since early May, resulting in the June 15 clash and heightened tension, India on Thursday said that the Chinese conduct this year has been in complete disregard of all mutually agreed norms and pacts.

"While there have been occasional departures in the past, the conduct of Chinese forces this year has been in complete disregard of all mutually agreed norms," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said.

India again charged China with trying to alter the status quo even as New Delhi dismissed Beijing's claims of sovereignty over the Galwan Valley as "unjustified and untenable" and said this was a shift from its earlier position.

"The deployment of a large body of troops and changes in behaviour have also been aggravated by unjustified and untenable claims. The recent shift in the Chinese position on the Galwan Valley is one example," Srivastava said.

India's strong statement came as the Indian Army maintained that disengagement on the ground was yet to begin. "The local commanders-level meeting has not taken place yet, so details have not been worked out. It will take some time for division commanders, sector commanders and battalion commanders to work out a mutual plan," a senior Army officer said.

'Onus on Delhi'

Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong put the onus on India to ease the border tension. "We hope the Indian side meets the Chinese side halfway, avoids taking actions that may complicate the border situation and takes concrete steps to maintain stability in the border areas," he said

India's firm stand on the Galwan Valley and transgressions by the Chinese is being seen as an attempt to drive home the message that was delivered at the Corps Commander-level talks on June 22 that the rules of engagement were no longer the same.

The Indian side, sources said, had made it clear at the meeting that its troops on the ground had been given a free hand to deal with situations as they deemed fit, which has been interpreted as a freedom to use arms if necessary.

"India's statement is a continuation of its position conveyed to the Chinese on the June 22 Corps Commander-level meeting. Except initial intelligence failure in checking the Chinese deployment and ingress, India has demonstrated that it will not let the Chinese strategy of two step forward, one step back succeed. I hope the statement emanates from the ground realities rather than from a strong anti-China wave that has engulfed the country," said B R Deepak, Sinologist and chairperson of the Centre for Chinese and South Asian studies at JNU.

A former diplomat echoed him: "Though ground reports suggest that de-escalation has not begun, India wants to show the Chinese that it will not be bogged down. Also, it is a befitting reply to the claims made by the Chinese over the Galwan Valley area," he said. P9

FIEO awaits govt response

"We have been given to understand that Customs is physically examining all imports from China, which is delaying clearance, adding to the cost of imports," FIEO president S K Saraf wrote to Commerce Secretary Anup Wadhawan. He is waiting for the govt's response and hopes to get it today

'Will hurt India more'

China's exports to India constitute 2.8% of their overall exports. But India's exports to China is 5.4% of its total exports, so the blockade will hurt India more, says FIEO

China blocks Indian shipments in tit-for-tat

ANURADHA SHUKLA @New Delhi

WITH the spike in bilateral border tensions spilling over to trade, shipments of Indian origin are being held up in Hong Kong and China in retaliation to India blocking China-origin shipments at domestic ports.

S K Saraf, president of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), revealed the tit-for-tat action by Beijing after reports of Indian Customs holding back Chinese consignments. This is causing delays in consignment clearance. The FIEO has taken up the matter with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. "We have been given to understand that Customs is physically examining all imports from China, which is delaying clearance, adding to the cost of imports," Saraf said in a letter to Commerce Secretary Anup Wadhawan. He said that some exporters have reported retaliatory blocking by Hong Kong and Chinese Customs.

Earlier, after consignments of Apple's iPhone from China were held at various Indian ports, the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum wrote the government sharing its concern. It said the Director General of Foreign Trade and Customs have abruptly halted clearance of consignments from China, which will send a chilling message to foreign investors.

They were also concerned that the decision to subject shipments from China to 100% manual examination will delay the supply chain and damage expensive components and critical imports from China, escalating cost and time for the already stressed industry. CONTINUED ON: P12

KARNATAKA COVID-19 BATTLE

442 TEST POSITIVE ON THURSDAY

TOTAL CASES 10,560

170 Total Deaths

6,670 Total Recoveries so far

- Six people succumb to disease during the day
- Five doctors in Mangaluru, and four in Madikeri test positive
- 23,000 senior citizens in Chamarajanagar to be tested
- District court judge in Hassan home quarantined after coming in contact with +ve constable P4

Don't want B'luru locked down? Act responsibly, CM tells citizens

ANUSHA RAVI @Bengaluru

"NO lockdown in Bengaluru, this is clear," declared Revenue Minister R Ashoka on Thursday, reiterating that the government has no plans of shutting down the state capital. Ashoka, who was named Bengaluru Covid-19 in-charge since Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar is under home quarantine, said there will be no blanket lockdown in Bengaluru, but measures like sealing adjoining roads in containment zones and adjoining houses in areas where single cases are reported will continue.

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Thursday morning put the onus on citizens to prevent a lockdown in Bengaluru. Later in the day, the CM held a special meeting to discuss containment measures and the preparedness in Bengaluru in the light of the spike in the number of cases. On Friday, the CM has called for a meeting of Bengaluru legislators from all parties to discuss the situation.

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa arrives at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Thursday | SHRIRAM BN

Bengaluru has been a model for the entire country. Compared to other big cities, we have things under control. We have taken necessary precautions in the backdrop of the rising Covid-19 cases.

BS Yediyurappa, Chief Minister

Yediyurappa urged officials to ensure immediate admission of patients who test positive for Covid-19 without prolonged delays. For this purpose, he said that 100 ambulances have been deployed and more will be approved on a need basis. Following review of active cases, clusters, spread and predictions on infection made over the next two weeks, the CM was apprised that the situation in Bengaluru was in control despite the spike in numbers.

"Bengaluru has been a model for the entire country. Compared to other big cities, we have things under control. We have taken necessary precautions in the backdrop of the rising Covid-19 cases. We will make our containment measures even more stringent, but people have to cooperate. Even after making it convenient for people to move about, people are not following social distancing norms or other precautions leading to a spike in cases, especially in slums. If people would want to spare Bengaluru from another sealdown, please cooperate with the government and ensure precautions are taken," Yediyurappa appealed. CONTINUED ON: P7

WET BLANKET

A woman and her son huddle under an umbrella as they brave the sudden showers that lashed Bengaluru on Thursday | MEHARA SASTRY | REPORT: P2

Four staffers at BSY's home office test +ve

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

TWO police personnel on the Chief Minister's security detail, a fireman and an electrician at the CM's home office 'Krishna' and official residence 'Kaveri', have tested positive for Covid-19 during a random test. The CM, who was also checked, however, tested negative.

The tests were conducted on Tuesday and the results were made available on Thursday. The CM and his staff were tested as a matter of routine on Tuesday and they all tested negative except for the four staffers who have been quarantined and the area sanitised. The CM's home office has been declared out of bounds for 48 hours as per guidelines.

While the fireman and the policemen were stationed at the gate and did not have access to the residence or the office, the electrician, however, had access to most parts of the buildings. Officials said the electrician had developed fever and had not been on duty for about 12 days and therefore, there was no cause for worry. The fireman and the policemen were posted at the 'Krishna' main gate. But since the CM uses the other gate between 'Krishna' and 'Kaveri,' any danger to the CM is minimal. The officials said contact tracing of the infected persons is on.

A thorough inquiry has been launched into the 'dimension of risk'. One official said, "There is now a serious rethink of the security apparatus, considering that the CM has four layers of segregated security."

EXPRESS READ

HUL to rebrand cream 'Fair & Lovely'

New Delhi: Hindustan Unilever has said it will remove the word 'Fair' from its brand 'Fair & Lovely', as a rebranding exercise, in the wake of voices against racial stereotypes. P12

Regular train services to remain cancelled

New Delhi: All regular mail, express, passenger services and suburban trains which were cancelled till June 30 due to Covid-19 will remain so till August 12, Railway Board said.

IIT-B classes online for this sem, others wait for govt nod

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA
@New Delhi

THE Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay has decided to conduct only online classes for the upcoming semester in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"After a long deliberation, we've decided that the next semester will be run purely in the online mode so that there is no compromise on the safety of the students. The pandemic has made us rethink the way we impart education," Director of IIT Bombay, Subhasis Choudhuri, stated.

Other IITs are waiting for directions from the Centre. A report recommending online classes, by a panel constituted by the standing committee of the IIT Council, has been forwarded to the HRD Ministry. "Our decision will be based on how the HRD Ministry guides us," the director of an IIT said. CONTINUED ON: P10

CBSE 10 boards out, 12 optional

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@New Delhi

The Central Board of Secondary Examination (CBSE) on Thursday told the Supreme Court that it has decided to cancel the remaining board exams for Classes 10 and 12, scheduled to begin on July 1, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told a bench headed by Justice A M Khanwilkar that while Class 10 boards have been cancelled, Class 12 students will get an opt-out option. Those opting out will be assessed on the basis of performance in their last three exams.

The Indian Certificate Secondary Education (ICSE), too, told the court it will cancel the remaining boards for its Classes 10 and 12 exams.

On CBSE's submission to hold the remaining Class 12 papers when the situation improves, the bench said, "The situation can vary from state to state. Will this decision be taken by the Centre or the state?"

The bench wanted more clarity about optional exams, publication of results and when the new academic year would start. It sought the CBSE's draft notification by 10.30 am on Friday for its perusal, following which final orders will be issued.

Mehta said that the CBSE's decision was based on inputs from various states. "We took this decision due to logistic issues," he said.

TESTING TIMES

Stressful start for SSLC students and govt under Covid-19 shadow

Students queue up to undergo thermal scanning in front of an SSLC examination centre in Mysuru on Thursday | UDAYSHANKAR S

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

THE biggest test for the State Government began on Thursday with the commencement of the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) examination across the state, riding on the ministers' assurances that it will be conducted safely without the threat of Covid-19 infection spreading among the children.

A total of 7,71,878 of the total 7,85,140 registered students wrote the first paper at 2,879 exam centres across Karnataka, with 13,212 remaining absent for various reasons.

However, despite assurances, anxieties persisted among students and parents, which were not altogether unjustified from the scenes across exam centres. Students started queuing up outside their respective exam centres from 7.30 am onwards maintaining social distancing, undergoing thermal screening and sanitising themselves. The first three-hour second language paper (English/Kannada) commenced at 10.30 am.

But after the exam, several parents gathered around even as students, who were meeting each other after almost two months, started mingling and greeting each other and exchanging notes on how the paper went for them.

The Department of Public Instruction had, in a note, appealed to parents to maintain social distancing at the exam centre. Ironically, the parents' anxiety, which had prompted their call to cancel the examination, brought them together, throwing caution to the wind. Several parents waited an hour prior to the completion of the exam at St Joseph's Indian High School in the city, crowding around and ignoring social distancing norms.

Although some students and parents said they were happy with the measures taken on the premises, others weren't and insisted that Primary and Secondary Education Minister S Suresh Kumar should postpone the exams. A parent said, "I request the minister to postpone the exams, considering the current situation and pressure on students." CONTINUED ON: P2

Students exuded a sense of relief, both before the exam when I spoke to them, and after. They just want to complete their examinations

S Suresh Kumar, Karnataka Primary and Secondary Education Minister

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